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Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report was prepared in compliance with General Assembly resolution 50/14 of 15 November 1995 concerning cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System (SELA).

2. The Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) wrote to the following organizations of the United Nations system requesting an update of their activities with SELA, to be included in the report of the Secretary-General requested by the General Assembly in resolution 50/14: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), World Trade Organization (WTO), International Atomic Energy Agency, International Civil Aviation Organization, International Fund for Agricultural Development, International Labour Organization (ILO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Maritime Organization (IMO), International Telecommunication Union, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Universal Postal Union, World Bank, World Health Organization (WHO), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations, United Nations Environment Programme, International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Institute for Training and Research, United Nations University (UNU), United Nations Development Fund for Women, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). Fourteen of those organizations sent updated information on their cooperation with SELA. Thirteen noted that they did not currently carry out any activities with SELA, although some of them expressed a desire to do so in the future. The following summary is based on the information submitted.

II. Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System

3. As noted in the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session (A/50/438), since the establishment in October 1975 of SELA, considerable cooperation has taken place among United Nations

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organizations, agencies and programmes, especially between ECLAC and SELA.

4. As indicated in that report, such cooperation has intensified over the years and has become more diversified in terms of both the areas of cooperation and the organizations concerned.

5. Cooperation between ECLAC and SELA has consisted, *inter alia*, in the participation of ECLAC and SELA representatives in various meetings of the two institutions and in the preparation by ECLAC of specialized documents in various subject areas in support of SELA activities. Some examples of that cooperation are listed below.

6. In the social sphere, ECLAC has continued to cooperate with SELA in inter-agency activities relating to integrated social policies in Latin America and the Caribbean. In that subject area, the following joint activities have been carried out:

(a) Coordination of economic and social policies in Latin America and the Caribbean project. Beginning in 1994, the Latin American Centre for Development Administration (CLAD), SELA and ECLAC began to carry out the project entitled "Coordination of economic and social policies in Latin America and the Caribbean". The general purpose of the project is to support those in Government, both political and technical officials, who are responsible for social development policies directed at overcoming the acute social imbalances afflicting the region and to help formulate a post-economic adjustment model of development. To accomplish those aims, the project promotes the exchange and analysis of information and experience among countries of the region. It was agreed that the first step would be the conceptual and methodological analysis of the problem from three complementary perspectives. This resulted in the preparation of three technical documents on integrated economic and social policies; State, society and poverty in Latin America: towards a new linkage of economic and social policy; and the experience with adjustment during the decade of the eighties in Latin America, its impact on income distribution and the design of social policies. The first phase of the project concluded with a meeting of experts (Cartagena, Colombia, June 1995) to discuss those documents, which were prepared by CLAD, SELA and ECLAC. The second phase of the project, in which UNESCO also participated, culminated in an inductive exercise in which lessons applicable to the design and implementation of integrated or coordinated social development policies in Latin America and the Caribbean were drawn from an examination of concrete experiences. The exercise culminated in a seminar/workshop on coordination of economic and social policies (La Paz, 9-11 October 1996), organized in collaboration with the Millennium Foundation. It was agreed that joint activities would be continued in 1997; a meeting is scheduled for November 1997 on efficacy in social policy, to be organized by SELA, CLAD and UNESCO;

(b) Social aspects of integration project. In 1996, ECLAC, together with SELA and other organizations in the region, began carrying out activities to facilitate inter-agency coordination on the social agenda of integration. Two such meetings were held at Caracas, from 3 to 7 March 1997. The first, organized by the Training Centre for Regional Integration (CEFIR) and SELA, was on the topic of regional integration and the challenges of competitiveness and convergence. ECLAC presented a paper on labour markets, convergence and competitiveness. The second event, also organized by CEFIR and SELA in consultation with other organizations in the region, took the form of a workshop on the social aspects of integration, in which the participants (the Institute for Latin American Integration, the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA), the Board of the Cartagena Agreement, the Andean Development Corporation and CLAD, CEFIR and SELA) exchanged information and views on their activities in the social sphere, identified promising areas for inter-agency cooperation in that area and considered means for improving coordination. It was agreed that inter-agency coordination could be pursued by creating an interactive electronic mail network for information-sharing to serve as the medium for inter-agency contacts; preparing an inventory of social programmes and projects; conducting joint human resource training activities; expanding to the rest of the region the system developed by CEFIR for observing the behaviour of social actors in integration; and comparing the various work programmes in order to identify issues appropriate for inter-agency cooperation. In follow-up to the workshop, ECLAC prepared and distributed a bibliography on social aspects of integration from data to be found in ECLAC databases;

(c) Tasks involved in organizing and conducting the First Regional Conference in Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development. Pursuant to commitment 10 (b) of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, the ECLAC secretariat did substantive and procedural work in preparation for the First Regional Conference in Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development (São Paulo, Brazil, 6-9 April 1997). The Conference was co-sponsored by the following organizations: Organization of American States (OAS), UNDP, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), UNICEF, Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and SELA. In

developing a work plan and determining the ultimate structure of the meeting, ECLAC maintained close contact and held meetings with focal points designated by each organization. Preparatory missions were conducted to the host country to complete the substantive and logistical arrangements for the regional conference.

7. The Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) also coordinated its programme activities with SELA through regular contacts with SELA officials and staff members.

8. In the area of international trade, transport and financing, ECLAC organized the second LAIA/ECLAC/SELA Meeting of Trade Policy Officials of Latin America and the Caribbean, (Caracas, February 1996). The third such meeting took place at Montevideo in October 1996, and the fourth meeting is scheduled for September 1997 in Santiago. The purpose of the meetings is to provide the officials with a forum for debating the subject and proposing measures to improve and coordinate trade policy in the region.

9. ECLAC also participated in the following: the technical working group on trends in the globalization process and scenarios for world change, sponsored by SELA (Buenos Aires, 29 January 1996); the meeting organized by SELA and the Venezuelan Institute for Social and Political Research on the socio-political agenda of the Caribbean Basin's integration process (Caracas, 11-14 February 1996); the technical workshop on intellectual property in the Uruguay Round, also organized by SELA (Mexico City, 20 May 1996); the intensive course on trade negotiations and WTO, organized by SELA (Mexico City, 26 August-6 September 1996); the Second Meeting on Competition Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean, organized by the permanent secretariat of SELA, the Venezuelan Superintendency for the Promotion and Protection of Competition and the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation, with the collaboration of UNCTAD (Caracas, 27-29 November 1996) and the second course on Central American integration, organized jointly with SELA (Tegucigalpa, 19-22 November 1996).

10. In the area of industrial policy, ECLAC participated with SELA in a number of meetings, among them:

(a) The first meeting of the Regional Forum on Industrial Policy, organized by SELA and UNIDO (San José, 27 and 28 October 1994);

(b) Seminar on work organization, technology and human resources in the restructuring process (Caracas, 2-4 September 1996) at which ECLAC presented a paper on in-house training and education;

(c) Expert workshop on industrial policy (Caracas, 16 and 17 September 1996) at which ECLAC presented a paper on the status of policies for industrial competitiveness in Latin America and the Caribbean in the mid-1990s;

(d) Seminar on regional integration and the challenges of competitiveness and convergence, organized by SELA and CEFIR (Caracas, 3-6 March 1997). ECLAC participated in the round table on convergence and competitiveness policies, presenting a paper on industrial competitiveness policies in Latin America and the Caribbean in the 1990s, and in the closing round table of the seminar;

(e) The second meeting of the Regional Forum on Industrial Policy, organized by SELA and UNIDO (Caracas, 31 July and 1 August 1997). ECLAC participated in the round tables on industry, technology, training and job creation and on experiences in implementing industrial or competitiveness policies.

11. ECLAC also had a number of working meetings with SELA officials to assess the design and organization of earlier meetings, particularly those on industrial policy.

12. To date there are no formal cooperation programmes between FAO and SELA. However, the two organizations have had frequent contact in the biennium 1996-1997. FAO representatives attended and made presentations at several meetings organized by SELA, including the meeting preparatory to the ninth session of UNCTAD (Midrand, South Africa, 27 April-11 May 1996) and the workshop organized jointly by SELA and IDB on market access issues in the Uruguay Round (Cartagena, Colombia, January 1996). At the workshop, which was attended by representatives of 24 Latin American and Caribbean countries, FAO presented a document on legal provisions relating to agricultural products, which discussed sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures, subsidy provisions and their implications, tariffs and the opportunities and challenges entailed in provisions for agriculture in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

13. Moreover, FAO, together with SELA, is establishing a framework for cooperation under the regional programme on vegetal germ plasm and the biotechnology and food security projects.

14. The possibility of further strengthening cooperation was recently discussed during the visit of the Permanent Secretary of SELA to the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean in early April 1997. On that occasion, major areas of cooperation, such as food security,

trade policy in connection with the Uruguay Round and competitiveness, were identified.

15. Cooperation between WTO and SELA has continued through regional and national seminars, technical missions, workshops and meetings organized in SELA member States, all of which dealt with WTO and the Uruguay Round agreements. WTO is confident that those activities will reinforce cooperation between WTO and SELA members in the implementation of the Uruguay Round results.

16. Under the SELA/ILO cooperation programme, the ILO Inter-American Research and Documentation Centre on Vocational Training (CINTERFOR) participated in a workshop on training and development of human resources for competitiveness (Caracas, July 1995).

17. SELA, under the auspices of CINTERFOR, UNDP and the Latin American Institute for Social Research, organized a workshop for specialists (Caracas, September 1996), on productive modernization, training of human resources and labour relations to promote an exchange of national experiences on those important issues within the globalization process. CINTERFOR presented a paper entitled "Labour ministries and vocational training". ILO provided a list of the most renowned labour relations specialists in the region to be invited to the event.

18. ILO was invited to participate in the SELA workshop on social dimensions of integration (Caracas, March 1997). Although it could not send a representative, ILO sent relevant documentation to the SELA secretariat, namely, a report prepared for the ILO Governing Body entitled "Social dimensions of the liberalization of international trade", a copy of the ILO Director-General's statement on employment to the meeting of the Group of Seven Industrialized Countries at Lille, France, in April 1996, the first chapter of *World Employment 1996/1997* and a working document entitled, "Labour dimensions of economic integration in Latin America and the Caribbean".

19. IMF has continued its cooperation with SELA in areas of common interest in its area of competence and jurisdiction.

20. Although IMO has not yet arranged cooperation activities with SELA, it reported that it would be pleased to explore whether cooperation could be arranged in the maritime and port sectors.

21. WMO welcomed General Assembly resolution 50/14. Since meteorology and operational hydrology are basic for economic development, it fully agreed with the need, expressed in paragraph 4 of the resolution, for intensifying support for and cooperation in the activities conducted by SELA in the fields of interest of WMO.

22. Cooperation between UNESCO and SELA has been highly satisfactory and is a fine example of the synergy and enrichment that can be achieved through intellectual cooperation. There were important instances of cooperation even before the signing of an agreement between the two organizations on 28 July 1988, as there have been since.

23. One of those instances was the joint initiative of UNESCO, SELA, ECLAC and other international organizations in the late 1980s in creating the Inter-Agency Group on Integrated Social Policies, whose fine performance helped to enrich the contribution the participating organizations were able to make to the process leading up to the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995). That experiment in working together also led to the project in which UNESCO is now involved concerning coordination of economic and social policies. Another project may soon be started related to growth and employment, which has been declared a priority issue by the SELA Latin American Council.

24. UNESCO and SELA have been cooperating in the last few years in such spheres as world change, technological prospects, intellectual property and the development of craft micro-enterprises. In recent months, the two organizations have been working, among other things, on "Project Demos", which has yielded interesting results in the areas of coordination of economic and social policies — a major publication on the topic is soon to appear — and higher education. In the latter area, UNESCO and SELA worked closely on organizing and conducting the Regional Conference on Policies and Strategies for Transforming Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (Cuba, November 1996), and in the process identified new possibilities for collaboration between their organizations.

25. Another cooperative activity between UNESCO and SELA now in progress is the programme of communication for integration in Latin America and the Caribbean, which has so far yielded the following results: creation and start-up of a network of Latin American economic dailies; design and development of the intra- and interregional information network for disseminating data on subject areas within the purview of SELA; publication of the SELA newsletter in Spanish and English; strengthening of the information and documentation system for organizations involved in cooperation and integration in Latin America and the Caribbean; and production of a series of radio programmes on integration in the region. In addition, two books are in preparation on the subject of communication and integration.

26. In addition to close inter-agency ties, reciprocal attendance on official occasions and cooperation on a variety of technical activities, seminars and meetings, a particularly significant feature of UNESCO and SELA cooperation is that it has included not only regional, subregional and other international organizations, but also agents from civil society, such as the members of the communication media, in their joint action, thereby making it an important promoter and catalyst in the service of development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

27. There are plans in the next biennium to develop a new line of cooperation, using SELA as a base of operations, that will relate to the implications of globalization for the development of the cultural industries of the Latin American and Caribbean countries.

28. UNIDO has carried out a number of activities in collaboration with SELA. It has, for example, co-sponsored the following meetings: a symposium on the link between technical and economic cooperation held on the occasion of the Eleventh Meeting of Directors of International Technical Cooperation (Mexico City, 20-22 May 1996); the SELA workshop for industrial policy experts (Caracas, 16 and 17 September 1996); the twenty-second regular meeting of the SELA Latin American Council on the topic of the integration process in Latin America and the Caribbean (Montevideo, 22-25 October 1996); and a regional seminar organized by the Brazilian Assistance Service for Micro- and Small Enterprises (São Paulo, 29 October-1 November 1996). UNIDO contributed by presenting an overview of the topics discussed and their potential application to the Latin American context.

29. The World Bank has been engaged in a process of elaborating the priorities for accelerating growth and reducing poverty in the countries of the region. The results of the project were summarized in a publication presented at the Third Annual Bank Conference on Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (Montevideo, 29 June-1 July 1997). An essential part of the Bank's future work in the region will be enhanced consultations with others active in pursuing the regional development agenda, as are ECLAC and SELA.

30. WHO has closely followed the activities of SELA in its capacity as a regional organization. In that regard, it has accompanied SELA at the annual meetings of heads of external cooperation of the countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region, the most recent of which was held at Antigua, Guatemala, in May 1997.

31. In June 1995 WIPO prepared and sent to the SELA permanent secretariat, at its request, an informative document entitled "Recent trends in industrial property legislation at the regional and international levels", in which it discussed the main developments in the field of industrial property at regional and international levels during the last few years. The document was distributed during the ministerial phase of the twenty-first regular meeting of the Latin American Council (San Salvador, 12 and 13 July 1995).

32. Two WIPO officials delivered lectures at the SELA Regional Seminar on the Interpretation and Application of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights in Latin America and the Caribbean (Caracas, 28 and 29 June 1995).

33. WIPO also conducted the Latin American and Caribbean Symposium on the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights in cooperation with the Government of Venezuela and with the assistance of the permanent secretariat of SELA (13-15 May 1997). The purpose of the Symposium was to discuss the implications of the Agreement for countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region that are party to the Agreement and was addressed to officials from ministries of trade and industry, ministries of foreign affairs and industrial property and copyright administrations of those countries.

34. In June 1997 the Permanent Secretary of SELA, accompanied by another SELA official, visited WIPO in Geneva and talked with the Director General and other WIPO officials on strengthening cooperation between the two organizations.

35. UNDP has been financing a project with SELA that funds several initiatives providing technical assistance in selected areas, primarily trade. The UNDP/SELA programme is nearing completion, and future discussions will be governed to a large extent by the more specific determination of future common priorities.

36. Under the regional project entitled "Support to SELA", which was a five-year effort carried out between 1992 and 1997, a number of activities were conducted in three major areas: external economic relations, industrialization and technological development and regional cooperation and integration.

37. UNCTAD has continued its collaboration with SELA. In early 1996, SELA assisted UNCTAD in organizing the consultation and coordination meeting that the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries held at Caracas in order to discuss their positions for the ninth session of UNCTAD. UNCTAD and SELA held joint advisory and consultative meetings with the Group at Geneva and Caracas

in order to assist them in the preparation of their negotiating agenda for the WTO Ministerial Conference (Singapore, 9-13 December 1996.

38. UNCTAD and SELA are continuing their cooperation in setting the guidelines for future collaboration in the execution of the successor to the LATINTRADE project, which was intended to enhance the negotiating capacity of the Latin American and Caribbean countries to enable them to participate more effectively in trade agreements. Funds are currently being sought to finance the successor project.

39. UNICEF, as in the past, has participated in some of the events organized by SELA, and the two organizations have exchanged information and analyses.

40. WFP will be developing in the near future more structured impact-evaluation systems for WFP-assisted projects and would welcome stronger ties with SELA.

41. Although UNU has had no specific cooperation activities with SELA during the reporting period, it would be willing to establish and foster such cooperation.

42. As part of its work as the regional focal point for technical cooperation among developing countries, since 1980 the permanent secretariat has been organizing region-wide meetings of directors of international technical cooperation as a means of consolidating the mechanism for technical cooperation in the region by strengthening the management capacity of national focal points. The institutionalization of this forum reaffirms the importance which the Latin American and Caribbean countries attach to consultation, coordination and consensus-building in relation to technical cooperation policies and activities they implement at the international, bilateral, joint and regional levels. Such actions are taken in response to international events and seek to optimize the use of the technical and financial resources available in the region. To the same end, since 1980 the Coordination Mechanism for Regional Bodies and Forums Engaged in TCDC Activities has also been institutionalized within the framework of SELA. Participants in the mechanism include many bodies and agencies of the United Nations and other international organizations, such as ECLAC, PAHO/WHO, UNIDO, the International Organization for Migration, the permanent secretariat of the General Treaty on Central American Economic Integration, IDB, OAS, UNDP, CARICOM, the World Bank, LAIA, the Latin American Association of Development Financing Institutions, the Association of Caribbean States, the Central American Bank for Economic Integration, the Andean Development Corporation, the European Union (EU), FAO, ILPES, the Board of the Cartagena Agreement, Mercosur, the Bolívar Programme, UNCTAD and UNESCO. Such meetings have reinforced the regular activities of each of those organizations and have facilitated the coordination of specific sectoral initiatives undertaken at the regional level with a view to channelling efforts and available resources towards priority areas identified by the Governments.

43. In pursuit of that objective, SELA organized the following meetings with the assistance of its member States and the above-mentioned organizations and with the financial and technical support of the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries of UNDP: a masters' workshop on innovative experiments in the mobilization of technical cooperation resources (Santiago, 2-6 October 1995), a programming and negotiation exercise in support of Haiti (Port-au-Prince, 22-24 November 1995), a symposium on the linkage of technical and economic cooperation and the Eleventh Meeting of Directors of International Technical Cooperation (Mexico City, 20-22 May 1996), a seminar/workshop on small and medium-scale enterprises: a strategic challenge for globalization and a seminar on the private sector and international cooperation: a strategic dialogue for competitive integration (São Paulo, Brazil, 28-31 October 1996), a symposium on the role of technical cooperation among developing countries as a support mechanism for decentralization processes in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Twelfth Meeting of Directors of International Technical Cooperation (Antigua, Guatemala, 19-22 May 1997). Both ECLAC and UNIDO played a very active role in the analysis of the subject of small and medium-scale enterprises. Participants figuring prominently in the discussions on decentralization included ECLAC, CLAD, UNDP, IDB, the World Bank, EU and others.

III. Conclusion

44. It is important to emphasize that cooperation between SELA and the programmes, organizations and agencies of the United Nations is growing and diversifying, and inter-agency cooperation has been established in many areas in which optimal use is being made of existing resources for the benefit of the countries of the region.

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Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 13 of General Assembly resolution 51/18 of 14 November 1996.

II. Consultations between representatives of the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference and representation at meetings

2. On 2 October 1996, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States Members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) held their annual coordination meeting at United Nations Headquarters to discuss the agenda of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, in particular those items of concern and interest to OIC. In response to an invitation from OIC, a senior representative from the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat attended the meeting.

3. The coordination meeting reviewed the current international situation, with particular attention to: the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Jammu and Kashmir; Afghanistan; Somalia; the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan; the consequences of Iraq's occupation of Kuwait; the situation pertaining to the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Security Council resolutions 731 (1992) and 883 (1993); Cyprus; and Tajikistan.

4. A high-level meeting subsequently took place between senior officials of the secretariats of the two organizations on 4 October 1996. The United Nations Secretariat delegation was headed by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and the delegation of the OIC secretariat, by the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs. The two sides discussed issues of mutual interest and ways of further strengthening cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and OIC in the political field, as called for by the General Assembly in its resolution 50/17 of 20 November 1995. Both sides expressed satisfaction at the level of cooperation attained by the two organizations and agreed to hold regular consultations with one another on issues of mutual interest.

5. In conformity with General Assembly resolution 51/18, in which the Assembly encouraged the participation of senior secretariat officials of the United Nations and the OIC in important meetings of the two Organizations, the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Mr. Adrianus Mooy, represented the Secretary-General at the twenty-fourth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers of the OIS member countries, held at Jakarta from 9 to 13 December 1996, and at the Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Summit at Islamabad on 23 March 1997.

6. During the period under review, regular consultations were held and information was exchanged between the secretariats of the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference with regard to ongoing peacemaking efforts of the two organizations, particularly in Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Somalia. Periodic consultations were also held between the Head of the United Nations Special Mission for Afghanistan and senior officials of OIC, with a view to promoting closer coordination and cooperation in the efforts of the two organizations to bring peace to Afghanistan. OIC also participated as an observer in the United Nations-sponsored inter-Tajik talks and signed the Protocol on Guarantees that constitutes part of the final Tajikistan peace accords. Regular information has also been exchanged with regard to the efforts of the two organizations to promote peace and national reconciliation in Somalia.

7. On 2 May 1997, the Secretary-General held a meeting with the new Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, His Excellency Dr. Azeddine Laraki, at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Both sides expressed particular interest in expanding cooperation between the United Nations and OIC in all areas of mutual interest and it was agreed that the two organizations would present concrete proposals in that regard.

III. Follow-up action on recommendations of the meetings between the United Nations system and the Organization of the Islamic Conference and its specialized institutions

8. The United Nations and OIC have established priority areas for cooperation and have designated the following organizations and agencies on both sides to act as focal points for follow-up action that would be required for the implementation of recommendations adopted by joint meetings of the two organizations:

Organization/agency	*Area*
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	Development of science and technology
United Nations Development Programme	Technical cooperation among Islamic countries
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	Assistance to refugees
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Food security and agriculture
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	Education and eradication of illiteracy
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	Investment mechanisms and joint ventures
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	Human resources development
United Nations Environment Programme	Environment

9. Outlined below is a summary of the reports received from the United Nations organizations and agencies serving as focal points for the priority areas during the period under review.

A. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

10. During the period under review, technical assistance provided by UNCTAD to the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) gained particular momentum. This was largely in relation to ongoing work in the World Trade Organization (WTO). In a joint IDB/WTO/ITC/UNCTAD meeting held at Geneva from 19 to 21 March 1997, a review was undertaken of the technical assistance which UNCTAD could provide with regard to such areas as accession to WTO, implementation of various WTO agreements and dissemination of information on WTO.

11. UNCTAD participated in IDB seminars on "Introduction to Uruguay Round Agreements" (Turkmenistan, 16-20 December 1996), "Uruguay Round Agreements" (Dakar, 8-10 January 1997) and on "Accession to the WTO and implementation of the Uruguay Round Agreements" (Jeddah, 6-10 June 1997). UNCTAD also participated in OIC's Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (Istanbul, November 1996), an IDB workshop on textiles/garments exports to the European Union from IDB members, held at Amman from 2 to 5 August 1997, and an IDB workshop on supply/demand for fertilizers in IDB member countries, held in Tunisia from 6 to 9 October 1997. In addition, IDB has requested UNCTAD to submit various technical assistance proposals on various international trade issues. Bilateral consultations with the IDB were also held for an investment-related project for least developed countries that are members of OIC. It is expected that a comprehensive programme of technical assistance financed by IDB and co-executed by UNCTAD and IDB will be in place by 1997/98.

B. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

12. On 5 July 1988, OIC and UNHCR signed an Agreement on Cooperation, according to which coordination between them on humanitarian issues would be enhanced. Such cooperation includes regular consultations on subjects of mutual interest and the exchange of information and documentation on the policies and activities of UNHCR and OIC, whereby the OIC participates as an observer in meetings of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme and UNHCR participates as an observer at conferences and other activities of OIC.

13. Within the framework of the Cooperation Agreement, UNHCR and OIC have continued to expand their cooperation primarily in areas relating to refugees and global humanitarian problems of common interest. Regular meetings between representatives of the two organizations both have been held at Geneva and at Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Exchanges between OIC and UNHCR were further expanded in the context of the coordination meetings of OIC and the focal points of United Nations lead agencies. OIC expressed its support for the general orientation of UNHCR's protection and assistance activities in its respective countries. OIC also indicated its willingness to assist UNHCR in enhancing its cooperation with the Islamic world.

14. The participation of UNHCR in the twenty-fourth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers of the OIS member countries, held at Jakarta from 9 to 12 December 1996, constituted a further step forward in the two organizations' common search for humanitarian solutions and adequate responses to the plight of various groups of refugees in Islamic countries. The Conference requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations and UNHCR to expedite the preparation of a survey to ascertain the number and situation

of the refugees in the Islamic world. It recommended that OIC member States and the Islamic Development Bank should increase their support for Islamic countries hosting refugees and appealed to OIC member States to cooperate with UNHCR in assisting refugees.

15. With regard to UNHCR's cooperation with the specialized institutions of OIC, a number of concrete steps have been taken to implement the terms of the special agreement between UNHCR and the Islamic Organization for Education, Science and Culture (ISESCO), signed in May 1991. The agreement provides for general and permanent cooperation between UNHCR and ISESCO, including the exchange of expertise, regular meetings of a joint commission and mutual benefits of staff services. In this connection, a joint UNHCR/ISESCO meeting was held at Rabat in November 1996 to further enhance the cooperation between both agencies. The project activities proposed by ISESCO in June 1996 were finalized. Two projects submitted by ISESCO in Morocco and Yemen will be co-funded by UNHCR.

16. Progress has also been achieved in cooperation with IDB within the framework of a Cooperation Agreement signed in January 1994. The main objective of the agreement is to enhance the cooperation between UNHCR and IDB in the field of humanitarian assistance to refugees and returnees. Consultations are conducted between the two organizations to identify projects and plans designed to assist refugees and returnees, focusing on essential needs, such as settlement, training, education, health and development. Also, within the field of promotion and dissemination of refugee law, UNHCR and OIC are exploring further opportunities to jointly organize seminars and conferences on asylum and refugee law in various Islamic countries.

C. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

17. FAO continued its cooperation with some of the specialized and affiliated institutions of OIC, particularly IDB, the Inter-Islamic Network on Water Resources Development and Management (INWRDAM), the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRTCIC), and the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC) of OIC. Cooperation between FAO and these institutions of the OIC focused on areas of common interest, such as food security, water resources conservation and management, water policy reform and training in agricultural policy analysis.

18. A delegation from IDB visited FAO headquarters in Rome in April 1997. Priority areas for possible future cooperation between FAO and IDB were identified, including: a training programme in agricultural policy analysis for the Caucasus and Central Asian republics; combating desertification; food outlook/forecasts; nutrition, food safety and consumer protection; commodities and trade; and statistics. It has also been agreed to focus collaboration on food security-related projects in the context of FAO's Special Programme for Food Security for a renewable three-year programme.

19. Cooperation between INWRDAM and FAO started in April 1996 and continued through 1996 and the first half of 1997. It has been agreed that cooperation between the two institutions could be achieved through networking, training and awareness-raising in specific technical areas focusing on water quality and management and irrigation technology. Cooperation between SESRTCIC and FAO also continued during the reporting period. The two institutions jointly organized the "Near East Regional Training Seminar on Food and Agricultural Policy Analysis", which was held at Ankara from 30 September to 11 October 1996. The seminar focused on the "Implications of Economic Policies on Food Security". ISESCO has also expressed the wish to establish cooperative relations with FAO and has proposed a cooperation agreement between the two organizations.

D. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

20. UNESCO has continued its cooperation with OIC through its specialized agencies, notably ISESCO and the Research Centre for Islamic History, Arts and Culture (IRCICA). UNESCO's cooperation with ISESCO was consolidated by the signature at Sarajevo on 30 March 1996 of a Protocol of Cooperation for 1996-1997 by the Directors-General of the two organizations. The Protocol, which provides for joint activities for the biennium in the fields of education, science, culture and communications, was drawn up in joint meetings between the two secretariats. The implementation of the Protocol and activities for 1997 under the Protocol were reviewed in Rabat and Paris in January and February 1997. It was agreed that an annual joint meeting would be held in Paris in November/December 1997 to draw up joint activities for 1998-1999. In preparation for that joint meeting, the two organizations will exchange their draft programme budgets to allow for the development of

joint activities. As far as cooperation with IRCICA is concerned, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Directors-General of UNESCO and IRCICA at Istanbul on 8 June 1996, providing a framework for ongoing and future cooperation between the two organizations.

E. United Nations Environment Programme

21. A Cooperation Agreement between OIC and UNEP was signed in 1992. UNEP and ISESCO also signed a Cooperation Agreement at Rabat on 4 December 1996, which stipulated, *inter alia*, that joint programming should be encouraged, information exchange should be promoted between the two institutions and focal points should be nominated from both agencies.

22. A representative from OIC participated in the Regional Consultations on UNEP's Global Environment Outlook (GEO) from 3 to 5 September 1996 in Bahrain, and a UNEP representative attended the seventeenth session of the Executive Council of ISESCO from 1 to 6 December 1996. It has been agreed that a joint project on the education of trainers in the field of environmental education will be jointly implemented by UNEP and ISESCO through two workshops, one for anglophone Islamic countries in Bahrain and one for francophone Islamic countries in Mauritania. Both projects are to be implemented in the second half of 1997.

23. A proposal for organizing a seminar on "Environmental Values in Islam" has been prepared by UNEP and submitted to OIC and ISESCO for joint sponsorship. Owing to the success of external fund-raising efforts, the project, which is estimated to cost $442,000, will be implemented with no financial implications to the three organizations. Outside funding totalling more than US$ 150,000 has been secured initially. The seminar is scheduled to take place in late 1997 or early 1998. It is hoped that the proceedings of the seminar will contribute to a multi-denominational, global meeting on environmental values in various regions. UNEP has also designated a focal point for cooperation with OIC and its specialized and affiliated institutions. The focal point represented UNEP at the joint United Nations/OIC meeting held at Geneva from 26 to 28 June 1996 and at the seventeenth session of the Executive Council of ISESCO.

F. United Nations Industrial Development Organization

24. A Cooperation Agreement between UNIDO and OIC was signed on 24 November 1996. The Agreement will facilitate cooperation between the two organizations in the following six areas: establishment of small-scale industries; joint industrial ventures between UNIDO and two or several States members of OIC; project identification and preparation; industrial investment promotion; development of industrial technological capabilities of Islamic countries; and technical cooperation between Islamic countries.

IV. Cooperation in the field of economic and social development

A. Economic Commission for Africa

25. Formal relations between the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the specialized agencies of OIC started in 1989 as recommended by the General Assembly in its resolution 44/8 of 18 October 1989. Since then, ECA has developed fruitful cooperative relations with OIC and its specialized agencies. As part of its ongoing relationship with OIC, ECA continued its cooperation during 1995-1996 with the Islamic Foundation for Science, Technology and Development (IFSTAD), a subsidiary organ and specialized agency of OIC. ECA and IFSTAD jointly organized the West African Conference on Science and Technology, held at Yamoussoukro from 8 to 11 May 1996. The conference examined a draft subregional policy on science and technology and initiated a number of subregional projects.

26. ECA has also established cooperative relations with IDB, ISESCO, and the Islamic Research and Training Institute (IRTI). The latter is developing an information system and network (OICIS-NET) complementary to ECA's system and network covering 19 African member countries of OIC. Joint efforts are also being made to coordinate activities between the two institutions. ISESCO and ECA are also exchanging information and data in the field of information/documentation management. Similar cooperation exists with SESRTCIC in exchanging publications and information. The Islamic Centre for the Development of Trade (ICDT) and ECA are also studying the possibilities of cooperation in the development of trade information systems. For the implementation of the second United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa (UNTACDA II), ECA has also held discussions with

IDB for the latter to assist in the implementation of the following three projects: (a) missing links of the trans-African highway; (b) regional integration and removal of non-physical barriers and cooperation in shipping and air transport; and (c) projects of landlocked countries, especially dry ports.

B. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

27. During 1996, ESCWA completed the implementation of a UNEP/IDB-funded project entitled "Assessment of Water Resources in the ESCWA Region Using Remote Sensing Techniques". Another IDB-supported project is currently under way which aims at establishing a regional water training network among ESCWA member States with the objectives of providing professional and technical training to strengthen and upgrade regional capabilities to meet the water training needs of ESCWA member States and disseminating relevant information on training activities in the water sector. Furthermore, through assistance previously provided by IDB, ESCWA has been able to support the publication and dissemination of material on technology development in ESCWA member countries. SESRTCIC also participated in ESCWA's Seminar on the International Comparison Programme in the ESCWA Region, held at Amman in October 1996, and in the second session of the ESCWA Statistics Committee, held at Amman in February 1997.

C. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

28. Since 1987, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has maintained a cooperative working relationship with the OIC. UNRWA has benefitted from the ongoing support of the OIC in its efforts to provide essential services and humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees. Cooperation between UNRWA and the OIC is reinforced by regular meetings between representatives of the two organizations, including with the Commissioner-General of UNRWA. The Agency maintains contact with the OIC secretariat and with the Islamic Development Bank by regularly providing information on Agency activities.

D. United Nations Children's Fund

29. Cooperation between UNICEF and OIC is well into its third decade. During 1996-1997, such cooperation took the form of advocacy for accelerated pursuit of the goals set by the World Summit for Children in 1990 and identification of projects to be executed jointly with ISESCO. High-level advocacy for the goals of the World Summit for Children took place during the twenty-fourth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held at Jakarta from 9 to 14 December 1996. In addition to reaffirming its commitment to the welfare of children in OIC member States by endorsing the Jeddah Declaration on the Rights and Care of the Child in Islam, the conference also mandated two specific activities: the convening of a Ministerial-level Conference on the Child and Social Affairs and the conduct of a mid-decade review of progress towards achievement of the goals for the year 2000. One notable achievement in the area of advocacy is the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by all OIC member States except one. A new chapter in cooperation was opened on 22 October 1996 when UNICEF and ISESCO signed a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the areas of education for girls, environmental and health education, psychosocial rehabilitation, peace education and promotion of awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

E. United Nations Population Fund

30. UNFPA has continued to support the International Islamic Centre for Population Studies and Research (IICPSR) at Al-Azhar University in Cairo. A regional project was formulated to incorporate population concepts within Islamic education, to be funded jointly with ISESCO. The project also aims to enhance the capacity of theologians and Islamic education officials of ISESCO member States to interpret population issues (including reproductive health and the gender dimension) from an Islamic perspective. UNFPA's assistance centres on technical advisory services and on the education of trainers. ISESCO and the IICPSR have also established coordination in the process of project formulation, which led to the signing in October 1996 of a joint Cooperation Agreement between UNFPA and ISESCO. Among the activities of the project were an expert group meeting of Islamic specialists in population education hosted by IICPSR and convened for the purpose of defining a framework for integrating population education concepts into Islamic education, and preparations for a Symposium on Muslim Women's Education, held at Al-Azhar in June 1997.

F. International Fund for Agricultural Development

31. During the period under review, IFAD expanded its collaboration with OIC agencies, notably IDB and ISESCO. With regard to IFAD's cooperation with IDB, it has been agreed that annual meetings should be held between senior staff of the two institutions in order to ensure better information flows and communication. The President of IFAD visited IDB in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in November 1996 and discussed with the President of the Bank increased co-financing and the need to focus cooperation in the newly independent countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and in sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, a high-level delegation from IDB visited IFAD headquarters in Rome in April 1997 and explored the modalities for future cooperation with regard to potential projects that could be undertaken jointly by the two institutions. The two sides also exchanged information and documents on potential projects for co-financing, as well as work programmes pertaining specifically to the sub-Saharan region. As regards cooperation with ISESCO, IFAD co-sponsored a seminar on irrigation management and legislation held at Bamako in May 1997.

G. International Labour Organization

32. ILO continues to attach great importance to strengthening relations and cooperation with OIC through the execution of joint activities and exchange of information on a wide range of issues of common interest, including employment promotion and poverty alleviation, private sector development, women workers questions, vocational training, vocational rehabilitation and occupational safety and health. Among the organizations and institutions of OIC, contacts were maintained with IDB, ISESCO and the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry, mainly to exchange information on the issues in the fields of the ILO's technical competence. Possibilities for joint activities were also explored.

H. World Health Organization

33. During the reporting period, WHO continued its cooperation with the OIC and its specialized institution, ISESCO. In April 1996, WHO and ISESCO signed an agreement for the implementation of joint programmes on health education and rehabilitation of the handicapped. WHO/ISESCO cooperation covered several areas, such as health education, promotion of environmental health and healthy cities programmes, and the promotion of the role of women in adult education. The two organizations continued their cooperation to promote the use of an Action-Oriented School Health Curriculum among various member States. This approach has attracted the attention and interest of several countries worldwide. WHO is also cooperating with the Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences and ISESCO in conducting several seminars on Islam and health. The following are some of the activities that have been jointly organized with ISESCO: a National Training Workshop on Rehabilitation in Palestine; a symposium held at Cairo on "Islam and Public Health"; an inter-country meeting on methods and techniques of health education for women working in the field of adult education; and an inter-country workshop on environmental education in Kuwait.

I. World Intellectual Property Organization

34. WIPO and OIC have been cooperating within the framework of a 1992 Agreement concerning the following priority areas: development of human resources; use of patent information and documentation; and the reinforcement of intellectual property infrastructure. WIPO officials met with the new Secretary-General of OIC at Geneva in early 1997 and discussed ways and means of strengthening cooperation to enhance the protection of intellectual property rights in OIC member States and improve the usefulness and the contribution of the intellectual property system to the economic development of OIC member States. It was agreed that the matter should be further discussed at OIC headquarters in Jeddah later in the year.

J. International Civil Aviation Organization

35. ICAO has concluded a Cooperation Agreement with the Islamic Development Bank and plans to develop and implement projects under the agreement.

K. Other departments and organizations of the United Nations system

36. The Department of Public Information and the Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World

Food Programme (WFP) conveyed information to the United Nations Secretariat on their programmes and activities in OIC member States during the year.

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Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 51/20 of 19 November 1996.

II. Consultations and exchanges of information

2. The Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States continued their practice of meetings and consultations. Cooperation between the two organizations and questions of interest to both concerning the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Somalia, Iraq and the situation in the Middle East were among those discussed.

3. During the period under review, the secretariats of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, as well as the Office of the Permanent Observer for the League of Arab States to the United Nations, continued to maintain close contact on matters of mutual concern to the two organizations. High-level contacts provided an impetus to the strengthening of relations between organizations of the United Nations system and the League. These included: the signing at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on 22 July 1996 of an agreement between UNESCO and the League of Arab States by the Director-General of UNESCO and the Secretary-General of the League concerning cooperation, within their spheres of competence, in matters relating to the occupied territories and the Palestinian people; meetings between the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the Secretary-General of the League in September 1996 and March 1997, and with the Group of Arab States and the Office of the Permanent Observer for the League of Arab States to the United Nations in October 1996.

III. Follow-up action on proposals agreed to at general meetings between organizations of the United Nations system and the League of Arab States

4. A summary of the reports of the organizations of the United Nations system on their cooperation with the League of Arab States during the period under review is given below. It represents the follow-up action on proposals adopted at the meetings held between the United Nations and the League at Geneva in 1993 (see A/48/468/Add.1) and at Vienna in 1995 (see A/50/496).

A. United Nations Secretariat

1. Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis

5. The former Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis (now part of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs) continued its cooperation with the League of Arab States in the fields of population and statistics. In the statistical sector, the Department provided its support for the implementation of a project focusing on the Arab Maternal and Child Health Survey which is one of the main activities of the Pan-Arab Project for Child Development (PAPCHILD)

6. In the field of population, the Department assisted in a project focusing on the strengthening of research activities of the Population Research Unit of the League. This project has created self-reliance in countries members of the League in the collection, analysis and utilization of demographic data for socio-economic development plans and programmes, and has improved the understanding of such issues as the status and role of women, and the impact of environment in the population and development processes in Arab countries. It has also developed the population information system for improving coordination and cooperation among countries members of the League.

2. Department of Public Information

7. The adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 51/20 on cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States received emphasis in the press release service (English and French) of the Department of Public Information and was also covered in its print and radio products on 19 November 1996.

8. A seven-minute Arabic segment of the radio magazine "Al-Majailatu Al-Natika" (No. 10/96) was devoted exclusively to the question of cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States. In the programme, representatives of various Member States, and in particular the former Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, described cooperation with the United Nations in the areas of social and economic development and underlined the need to strengthen it further.

B. Economic Commission for Africa

9. As part of its direct relations with a specialized agency of the League of Arab States, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) continued, in the period 1995-1996, its cooperation with the Documentation and Information Centre of the League (ALDOC) in the field of information technology. Accordingly, ALDOC and the Development Information Services Division of ECA have had an extensive exchange of data and information. Furthermore, ALDOC assisted ECA in the development of the North African Development Information System and the Arab Information Network.

10. In the view of ECA, there exists a vast potential for cooperation between its secretariat and that of the League. This potential could be realized in the event of the establishment of formal relations between the two institutions, as it will be possible to maintain close liaison, exchange information, hold regular consultations, define areas of cooperation and undertake joint activities.

C. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

11. During the period under review, the programme of work of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) included different aspects aimed at harmonizing, strengthening and intensifying cooperation with the League of Arab States. Contacts were maintained with the League and its specialized agencies, involving the preparation of reports and reciprocal participation in meetings.

12. In the field of population, ESCWA coordinated activities with the League, the Arab Demographic Centre and the International Union of Scientific Studies on Population in the preparations for the first Arab Regional Conference held at Cairo in December 1996, and presented a paper on gender statistics.

13. The Commission cooperated with the League in the organization of a joint expert group meeting on border crossing formalities and agreements for the transport of goods and passengers, and on a port pricing structure for Arab ports.

14. In the agricultural sector, ESCWA participated in the workshop organized by the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development on the impact of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade on Agriculture, held at Amman in May 1996, and took part in the twenty-first session of the Statistical Committee of the League in November 1996.

15. In the area of environment, ESCWA prepared a report on the regional implementation of Agenda 21 and submitted it to the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment at its eighteenth session, held at Cairo in November 1996.

16. Pursuant to the Arab Regional Conference on Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, held at Amman in September 1996, ESCWA adopted three core areas of activity: women and poverty, women and decision-making, and the Arab family. The Ministers of Social Affairs requested the League to cooperate with ESCWA in the preparation of a programme for follow-up action.

17. The Commission also cooperated with the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in the publication of a regional directory on sources of industrial information in the Arab countries. Furthermore, ESCWA provided an outline for discussion with AIDMO on activities proposed for joint implementation.

D. United Nations Children's Fund

18. Cooperation between the League of Arab States and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has been expanding steadily since 1995, to include an emphasis on the rights of children, including support to the process of reporting on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, studies on the implementation of the Convention in Arab countries, and an analysis of the reports being made to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Collaboration has continued in the monitoring of goals for children, particularly in health and education, and in advocacy for children. The Fund supports the activities of the Childhood Department of the League of Arab States in these areas.

19. Periodic joint meetings have continued to monitor progress on the Arab Plan for the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, adopted in November 1992. This included a review in May 1996 of achievements made in the Arab countries towards the mid-decade goals for children. To further this process, a technical committee comprised of the League of Arab States, a regional non-governmental organization, the Arab Council on Childhood and Development and UNICEF, met annually. The Committee has enabled the coordination of activities and has established priority areas for collaboration.

20. The League of Arab States and UNICEF have continued their close collaboration in data collection and analysis with regard to Arab children. The Fund has contributed, on average, 25 per cent of the external funding for each country survey under the PAPCHILD project.

21. In the educational sector, the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) and the Middle East and North Africa Regional Office of UNICEF worked jointly in implementing the Education for All initiative, especially with regard to increasing school enrolment of girls.

22. The Fund continued its joint activities with the Arab States Broadcasting Union, including capacity-building on child-related issues, and the distribution of a co-produced radio magazine series on child rights and women's issues and goals for children. The League of Arab States has declared the first Monday of each October as the Day of the Arab Child. The League participated actively in the regional consultations sponsored by UNICEF on children and armed conflict.

E. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

23. In the course of 1996 and 1997, fruitful consultations took place between the secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the League headquarters, as well as the Office of the Permanent Observer for the League at Geneva.

24. At the request of the League and the Organization of African Unity, UNCTAD sent a mission to Nouakchott in January 1997 to assist both organizations and the Government of Mauritania in organizing a workshop for the participants in the second Afro-Arab Business Week.

25. In response to General Assembly resolution 51/20, the UNCTAD secretariat, during the period under review, intensified consultations with the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States on a number of issues related to the Palestinian economy.

26. In this connection, extensive consultations were held with the General Secretariat of the League regarding the comprehensive study under way at UNCTAD on the Palestinian economy in the context of regional cooperation.

27. With regard to promoting regional and subregional cooperation in trade, the emphasis has been primarily placed on prospects for the expansion of trade and economic relations between the Palestinian territories, Egypt and Jordan with possibilities of subsequently including other countries of the region. A project proposal on the subject was discussed in a meeting held between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNCTAD. The meeting was attended by representatives of the Arab countries and of the League of Arab States. The project proposal was endorsed and subsequently submitted to UNDP for funding through its regional funding facility.

28. In 1997, discussions took place regarding potential cooperation between the League and UNCTAD in the following technical areas: transport, customs and trade facilitation; banking and insurance; new financial services; micro-enterprise services; enterprise competitiveness (trade points and trade efficiency assessment); trade-related legal issues; and human resource development.

29. In May 1997, at the request of the League, UNCTAD made a presentation of its Automated System of Customs Data Entry, Control and Management, with a view to creating awareness of the benefits of the System in reforming customs procedures and management.

F. United Nations Development Programme

30. The cooperation between UNDP and the League of Arab States and its specialized agencies continues to focus on several areas of mutual interest. The areas of cooperation can be summarized as follows:

(a) *Exchange of information*. The Regional Bureau for Arab States of UNDP exchanges information with the League on UNDP initiatives and mandates through briefing sessions provided to ambassadors of the League accredited to the United Nations.

(b) *Participation in programme activities*. The League and its agencies participated in the intergovernmental meetings which discussed regional programmes and projects, round-table meetings and several thematic seminars, workshops and conferences, such as the

Expert Meeting on Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Livelihoods in the Arab Region, held at Damascus from 22 to 24 February 1996, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)/UNDP Symposium on Sustainable Growth in the Arab States, held at Sana'a on 8 and 9 June 1997;

(c) *Direct support to the League of Arab States.* Support was provided by UNDP for the establishment of a modern and sophisticated documentation and information centre for the League, in collaboration with UNESCO. It also provided assistance to the secretariat of the League in administrative and managerial development, which strengthened its organizational structure.

31. The Regional Bureau for Arab States was invited to participate in the work of the League's Joint Committee on Environment and Development for Arab States. Accordingly, the Bureau designated the UNDP Cairo Office as the focal point and representative to the Joint Committee.

32. The League of Arab States and some of its specialized and associated agencies continued to execute, as well as share the cost of, projects with UNDP. The Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) has been by far the main source of cost-sharing for UNDP-sponsored projects aimed at establishing regional software technology centres, the Centre for Environment and Development in the Arab States and Europe (CEDARE), and at increasing the productivity of barley, pastures and sheep in the critical rainfall zones. Cooperation also continues with the Arab Organization for Agriculture Development, the Arab Monetary Fund and the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

33. In order to enhance and systemize cooperation between the two organizations, the League of Arab States and UNDP are in the process of finalizing a cooperation agreement which provides for regular consultations on issues of concern to the Arab region. It is expected that the cooperation agreement will be signed by both parties in 1997.

34. With regard to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, the UNDP Office to Combat Desertification and Drought has developed various approaches to address the innovative provisions of the Convention, such as participatory approaches, the establishment of national desertification funds and the concept development of the national action programme process as an interactive, decentralized planning tool. In this context, the Office offers technical assistance for the launching of national action programmes, as called for under articles 9 and 10 of the Convention.

G. United Nations Environment Programme

35. In the framework of the long-standing cooperation between the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the League of Arab States, specifically the Technical Secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment, and under a project financed by UNEP to support the implementation of the Arab programmes for sustainable development, several activities were undertaken in the Arab region with the participation of concerned Arab, regional and international organizations.

36. In the area of combating desertification, the activities included: the convening of workshops on green belts; a study on the state of desertification in the Arab region and ways and means to deal with it; and a study on green belt projects in North Africa, Badyat El Sham and the Arab Peninsula. A manual of institutions and experts in the field of combating desertification was also prepared.

37. In the area of conservation of biological diversity, an Expert Group Meeting on Biodiversity in the Arab World was held at Cairo in October 1995.

38. In the field of controlling industrial pollution and the promotion of cleaner production technologies, a book of guidelines for the identification of the environmental impact of industries in the Arab region was prepared and printed in 1995. Furthermore, case studies were initiated to encourage the use of the guidelines. A training workshop on the environmental impact assessment of industries was also held.

H. United Nations Population Fund

39. Over the past few years, cooperation between United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the League of Arab States has focused on two main areas: the implementation of the programmes of action of the international conferences that are relevant to population and development; and strengthening regional and local capabilities to support the formulation and analysis of population and development policies through the design and implementation of related research activities and the dissemination and utilization of their findings.

40. In a follow-up to the implementation of the recommendations of relevant international conferences and forums, UNFPA and the League jointly sponsored and participated in a number of regional conferences, including the Regional Meeting of Experts and Ministers of Social Affairs on the Follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action, held at Amman in September 1996. The meeting called for action to ensure access to quality reproductive health care and to enhance job opportunities and training for women. It also endorsed a recommendation to support the Family and Women's Affairs Unit of the League of Arab States.

41. The League of Arab States also participated in a number of meetings, supported by UNFPA and organized by ESCWA, held in the region during the past year. Among these was the meeting of the Heads of National Population Councils and Committees in the Arab World which addressed important population and development themes, such as the effects of economic adjustment programmes on population, and population variables and poverty.

42. With co-sponsorship from UNFPA, the League of Arab States, the Arab Gulf Programme for the United Nations Development Organization (AGFUND), UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Planned Parenthood Federation, and with technical input from the United Nations, the regional Pan-Arab project on Child Development, with its component the Maternal and Child Health Survey, was continued through 1996 and 1997. In collaboration with the League, UNFPA convened an expert group meeting in April 1996 to review the reproductive health module prepared by PAPCHILD. This module is now being applied in a survey in Morocco. Other areas of inter-agency collaboration have resulted in the sponsoring of a complementary husband module to the 1997 Demographic and Health Survey in Jordan.

43. The Pan-Arab Project for Child Development has been a model for inter-agency partnership in the region and has generated a regional database characterized by comparability through standardized methodologies. In some countries, the indicators generated on maternal and child health and family planning are the only current data available in the country, for example, in Lebanon. The Project continues to generate data that are used for the development and evaluation of population policies and programmes throughout the region.

44. Since 1993, UNFPA has been involved in strengthening the capabilities of the Population Research Unit. Currently, UNFPA is conducting an independent evaluation of the capabilities of the Unit, as well as the degree to which the UNFPA-supported project has achieved its stated objectives. The evaluation will also make recommendations on how to improve this capacity further.

45. The cooperation between UNFPA and the League has so far been very fruitful. Strengthening this cooperation at an institutional level by involving all the relevant departments and units within the League will enhance and optimize the ability of Governments to implement population and development policies and programmes.

I. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

46. Significant progress was achieved in cooperation between the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the League of Arab States during the period under review. The period was characterized by an intensification of contacts between UNRWA and the League, and a strengthening of their relationship in support of a continuation of UNRWA humanitarian activities.

47. The Agency maintained contact with the secretariat of the League at Cairo and with the Permanent Observer for the League in New York, participated in regular sectoral meetings organized by the League, and sought to foster exchanges between its officials and the secretariat of the League at various levels and in various forums.

48. The Agency and the League continued their cooperation in the educational sector. Together with UNESCO, UNRWA and the League co-sponsored a seminar on support and development of Palestinian education and the educational process for the children of Palestine, held at Cairo in June 1996. The Seminar examined Palestinian educational needs and means to support and develop the education of Palestinian children in a variety of areas, *inter alia*, noting the distinguished role played by UNRWA in that regard. The sixth annual joint meeting between UNRWA and the League Council on Education for the Children of Palestine was held at Cairo in December 1996. The meeting reviewed educational services offered to Palestine refugees in the host countries, and issues facing the UNRWA educational programme.

49. The critical financial situation and the role of the Agency in the present context were the subject of considerable discussion in various forums of the League. Support for UNRWA humanitarian activities; concern over the regular budget deficits faced by the Agency and their implications for the Palestine refugees and the host authorities; rejection of any reduction in or cessation of

UNRWA services in any of its five fields of operation; the necessity of its continuing to provide services until the Palestine refugee problem was resolved; and appeals for increased contributions to UNRWA, including by member States of the League, were the themes reiterated on a number of occasions by various organs of the League, including at meetings of the Council of Ministers (in September 1996 and March 1997), the Conference of Supervisors of Palestinian Affairs in the Arab Host Countries (in January 1997) and the Council on Education for the Children of Palestine (in December 1996).

50. Within that context, UNRWA continued to benefit from the League's ongoing generous support for its programmes and its continuing efforts to urge donors to increase voluntary contributions to the Agency's regular budget. In 1996, member States of the League contributed US$ 7.3 million to the Agency, mainly to its special assistance programmes but also to its regular budget. In September 1996, the Commissioner-General of UNRWA wrote to the Secretary-General of the League advising him of the Agency's continuing financial crisis and its implications, and reiterating the Agency's earlier request that Arab donor States increase their contributions to the Agency's regular budget to the level of US$ 10 million, collectively, in 1996. In addition to the numerous appeals made by the League for additional contributions to UNRWA, mentioned above, the League Council of Ministers, at its meeting in March 1997, reaffirmed League Council resolution 4645 of 6 April 1997, in which the Council called upon member States of the League to increase their contributions to the 1981 level of 7.73 per cent of the Agency's regular budget.

51. At the invitation of the secretariat of the League, UNRWA participated in a special joint meeting with representatives of the Arab host countries and the secretariat, which was held at Cairo in March 1997, to discuss the conditions of Palestine refugees in the area of operations. Among the issues considered at the meeting, which had been called for by the League Conference of Supervisors of Palestinian Affairs in the Arab Host Countries, were relations between the Agency and the Arab host countries, the Agency's critical financial situation, austerity measures introduced by the Agency owing to funding shortfalls, and distribution of funding under the Agency's peace implementation programme. The report of the joint meeting was noted by the League Council of Ministers at its March 1997 meeting.

J. United Nations Centre for Human Settlements

52. During the period under review, the cooperation of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) (UNCHS) with the League of Arab States and its member States focused on the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), held at Istanbul in June 1996, and specifically, on the preparations for it. The third Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting for Habitat II was held at Rabat, in September 1995, followed by the Dubai International Conference on Best Practices for the Urban Environment, hosted by the Municipality of Dubai, United Arab Emirates. In line with the discussions at the coordination meeting held between the United Nations and the League of Arab States at Vienna in July 1995, UNCHS provided technical support for the elaboration of urban and housing indicators in eight member States of the League as part of the preparation of their respective national plans of action submitted to the Habitat II, as well as to guide post-Conference national policy and local action in the housing and urban development fields.

53. Further, UNCHS and the League of Arab States sought to intensify cooperation through reciprocal representation at each other's major meetings. The Centre participated in the fourteenth session of Council of Arab Ministers for Housing and Reconstruction in November 1996; a resolution was subsequently adopted by the same body on the upgrading of the UNCHS regional information office at Amman to a fully fledged regional office for the Arab States. Following upon this initiative, the Commission on Human Settlements, at its sixteenth session, held at Nairobi in May 1997, called upon the Executive Director of UNCHS to prepare a comprehensive report on the issues concerning the upgrading, in full consultation with the League of Arab States and the host country.

K. International Labour Organization

54. The International Labour Organization (ILO) maintained close cooperation with the League of Arab States and, in particular, with its specialized agency, the Arab Labour Organization (ALO), through the conduct of joint activities and coordination of action related to issues of common interest.

55. The ILO and League of Arab States Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region continued its activities in the exchange of information, especially in the field of occupational safety and health.

56. The ILO/ALO joint Seminar on Community-based Vocational Rehabilitation, which had been postponed from the previous biennium, was conducted in May 1996. Moreover, ILO and ALO held a joint committee meeting early in 1996 to establish the programme of joint activities for the biennium 1996-1997 and agreed to organize, during the biennium, eight seminars at the regional and country levels, in the fields of vocational rehabilitation, vocational training, the development of employment offices, women's equality of treatment and opportunity, labour statistics and adaptation to economic and social change.

57. One of the seminars, on the role of employers' and workers' organizations in occupational safety and health, was conducted in December 1996. The two organizations completed preparations for the other seminars which were scheduled to be held during 1997.

58. Furthermore, ILO provided technical and financial assistance to the Regional Arab Programme for Labour Administration, which is now managed by ALO. The two institutions also collaborated in the implementation of the ILO/UNDP regional programme on the support of Arab migration policies, which was completed in March 1997.

L. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

59. Cooperation has continued between UNESCO and the League of Arab States in the fields of education, culture, sciences and social and human sciences. In the field of education, a seminar on support and development for Palestinian education and the educational process of the youth of Palestine was held at the headquarters of the League at Cairo, from 1 to 2 June 1996.

60. In the field of culture, a number of activities in the Arab region have been undertaken within the framework of the World Decade for Cultural Development and, in particular, in the field of cultural tourism. In that respect, UNESCO organized a seminar with 100 participants on culture, tourism, development, which was held at Sana'a from 17 to 19 September 1996. It also participated in a meeting organized by the League at Cairo in November 1996, concerning the action of the League for the preservation of the Old City of Jerusalem. On this occasion, UNESCO presented its programme for the preservation of the monuments of Jerusalem, which is being financed from extrabudgetary resources.

61. In the field of science, several activities and joint projects have been undertaken with ALECSO and the UNESCO Cairo Office, including: a workshop on agricultural applications of genetic engineering, held in Tunisia from 20 to 29 June 1996; a workshop on biodiversity in the Arab region, held at Beirut from 7 to 10 October 1996; and a regional workshop on Arab networking of biosphere reserves in the Arab region, held at Damascus from 2 to 5 December 1996.

M. World Bank

62. Traditionally, the World Bank has made available to the League of Arab States its global experience on human agenda issues of mutual concern. The Bank's resident mission at Cairo in particular has the lead in maintaining ties with representatives of the League and ensuring the sharing of information.

63. At the general meeting held at Geneva, the World Bank affirmed its intention to continue its cooperation with other United Nations and League institutions and to further support their efforts in the fields of poverty alleviation, education and human development, health and water resource management.

N. International Telecommunication Union

64. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Regional Office for the Arab States and the technical secretariat of the Council of Arab Telecommunication Ministers of the League of Arab States continued their cooperation during the past year by means of the following: (a) exchange of information; (b) coordination of regional seminars and training courses; and (c) preparation of a cooperation agreement between the League and ITU. A draft coordination agreement, based on existing agreements between ITU and some regional organizations, was proposed by the League of Arab States and is currently under study by the ITU Legal Section.

O. World Meteorological Organization

65. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has collaborated with the League of Arab States in the context of the existing working arrangements in the fields of meteorology and operational hydrology. This collaboration has been specifically carried out through the Permanent Meteorological Committee of the League.

66. The working arrangements of WMO with the League and some of its bodies have resulted in fruitful projects which are being successfully implemented for the benefit of the Arab countries. Recently, WMO has been engaged in promoting the management of water resources in the countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea by means of the Mediterranean Hydrological Cycle Observing System (MED-HYCOS) which is a part of a worldwide initiative, the World Hydrological Cycle Observing System.

67. Within the framework of UNDP and trust fund agreements, technical assistance projects for the development of national meteorological and hydrological services, including manpower development, are being implemented in a number of Arab States.

68. Moreover, the WMO Regional Meteorological Training Centres in Algeria and Egypt continue to play a vital role in the development of human resources in the Arab States. Through the WMO Voluntary Cooperation Programme and regular budget, additional training in specialized fields, equipment, and expert and consultant services have been provided to a number of Arab States.

P. International Fund for Agricultural Development

69. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has continued to provide financial support to the specialized agencies of the League of Arab States in order to support various activities in the fields of agricultural research and training. The Fund has recently approved a technical assistance grant to finance a regional programme for technical backstopping of IFAD projects in the Near East region. In addition, another grant was approved in December 1996 for the control of the date palm red weevil, stem borer and grubs by entomopathogenic nematodes in the Arabian Peninsula.

70. The Fund participated in a subregional consultation for Western Asia on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, which took place at Damascus, from 9 to 11 April 1997. The meeting was organized by the Arab Centre for the Study of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD), the Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe and the Convention secretariat. The Consultation sought to achieve effective implementation of the Convention, to further cooperation and to coordinate the sharing of experience in the preparation of National Action Plans in the region.

71. The Fund has also collaborated with the financial institutions of the League. The Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development remains the major financier for most projects funded by IFAD in the Arab region.

Q. International Maritime Organization

72. Pursuant to the agreement of cooperation between the two organizations, the League is represented regularly at the meetings of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), including those of the IMO Council and Assembly.

73. In addition, IMO has implemented from time to time projects involving member States of both IMO and the League. Within the context of its integrated technical cooperation programme, IMO has assisted national training institutions and supplemented their capacity-building with projects at the regional and subregional levels.

R. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

74. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the League of Arab States have been pursuing efforts to strengthen their cooperation and coordination, primarily in areas relating to refugees and more generally in relation to global humanitarian issues of common interest. A draft cooperation agreement is being finalized and will be submitted to both organizations for final approval.

75. During 1996, contacts and consultations continued between the League and UNHCR to identify the most appropriate solutions to critical refugee situations in the Arab region. Cooperation between the two organizations involved other concerned parties and permitted the resolution of complex problems in a coordinated manner.

S. United Nations Industrial Development Organization

76. During the period under review, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has continued to maintain close cooperation with the League of Arab States and its specialized organizations. Of special relevance was the cooperation with the Arab regional

organizations concerned with industrial development, in particular the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization but also with other organizations, such as the Arab Iron and Steel Union, the Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting, the Arab Union for Cement and Building Materials and the General Union for Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture for the Arab Countries.

IV. General meeting on cooperation between the secretariats of the United Nations system and the League of Arab States and its specialized organizations

77. As recommended by the General Assembly in resolution 51/20, the general meeting on cooperation between the representatives of the secretariats of the United Nations system and the League of Arab States and its specialized organizations took place at Geneva, from 2 to 4 July 1997.

78. Representatives of the following bodies of the United Nations system and the League of Arab States participated in the meeting:

(a) *United Nations system*. United Nations Secretariat (Department of Humanitarian Affairs, Department of Political Affairs and its Centre for Disarmament Affairs, Department of Public Information), UNCTAD, UNCHS, UNEP, UNHCR, ESCWA, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), ILO, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNESCO, WHO, World Bank, ITU, WMO, IFAD, UNIDO and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA);

(b) *League of Arab States*. League of Arab States secretariat, Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD), Arab Academy for Science and Technology (AAST), Arab Centre for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD), Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA), Arab Labour Organization (ALO), Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development (AAAID), Arab Atomic Energy Agency (AAEA), Council of Arab Ministers of Interior (CAMI), Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD), Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO), Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Agencies (AGFUND).

79. The Meeting was co-chaired by the Under-Secretary-General, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, and the Assistant Secretary-General for International Political Affairs of the League of Arab States. They represented the respective Secretaries-General of the two organizations.

80. The meeting undertook an assessment of the cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States. It noted with appreciation the determination of both organizations to strengthen further the existing cooperation by developing specific proposals in the areas of collaboration. Its participants recognized the importance of continued cooperation between the two organizations, with a view to contributing to the maintenance of international peace and security and to promoting social and economic development.

81. The United Nations and the League of Arab States reiterated their firm commitment to cooperate and coordinate their efforts to promote peace and security in accordance with the objectives, principles and provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

82. The United Nations took note of the efforts deployed by the League of Arab States to solve regional disputes and ease tensions in the Middle East, such as in Somalia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Algeria. In the recent past, when joint United Nations and League of Arab States political engagements took place — in Somalia in 1994-1995 and in Yemen in 1994 — both organizations benefited from coordinated action.

83. In this regard, the meeting acknowledged that those efforts are consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations. The meeting also agreed that both the United Nations and the League of Arab States should, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, further investigate ways and means to assist the development and enhancement of the League's capabilities in the areas of preventive diplomacy and peacemaking, taking into consideration the present efforts of the League to evolve suitable mechanisms for the resolution of regional conflict.

84. The meeting recognized the need for enhanced consultation between the secretariats of the two organizations, in particular for the purpose of strengthening their capacity to act in the areas of early warning, preventive action and peacemaking, as stipulated in the Agenda for Peace. The United Nations and the League of Arab States agreed that permanent contacts and consultations between the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and the Department of International Political

Affairs of the General Secretariat of the League could improve awareness of intentions and activities undertaken by both organizations. In this context, the United Nations Secretariat has designated the West Asia Division in the Department of Political Affairs as the contact point for cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States. The General Secretariat of the League has appointed the Division of International Organizations to serve as the focal point in its contacts with the Department of Political Affairs.

85. The meeting decided that consultations between the two political departments would take place regularly, not only at the departmental level but also between subdivisions, units and desk officers. The meeting encouraged enhancement of the flow of substantive information and documentation between the Secretariats.

86. The meeting acknowledged with satisfaction a number of important steps undertaken by the League and its member States in the field of disarmament. The meeting stressed the importance of, and encouraged, further determined efforts by all member States with regard to the international comprehensive approach towards the issue of disarmament in the Middle East.

87. The meeting stressed that the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and all international disarmament-related agreements is both a moral obligation and a necessity for the maintenance of international peace and security.

88. The United Nations and the League of Arab States expressed their concern over the continuing problem of landmines and other unexploded devices that are causing serious human suffering and which have negative social and economic effects on mine-infested countries over an extended period. Although the progress achieved so far to solve the problem of landmines is welcomed, additional efforts should be dedicated towards achieving more rapid and substantive progress.

89. The meeting welcomed the Brussels Declaration which confirmed the need for international cooperation and assistance in the field of mine clearance in affected countries. The extension of financial and technical assistance to these countries in order to assist them in resolving the problem in the shortest possible time is encouraged and supported.

90. The United Nations and the League of Arab States welcomed the progress made in the Ottawa process and urged the vigorous pursuit of an effective, legally binding international agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines.

91. The League of Arab States also underlined the necessity of establishing a binding agreement that should include a special provision to secure the extension of financial and technical assistance to mine-infested countries in order to enable them to get rid of this problem in the shortest possible time.

92. The meeting took note that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the League of Arab States both saw it as their role to work with Governments to help to further improve the framework for refugee protection in the Middle East in order to allow for effective and humanitarian management of a constantly changing refugee situation in the region. The goal in this joint effort is to maintain high standards and to ensure that precedent-setting approaches set the right example for programmes in the entire region in dealing with refugees and displaced persons. In this regard, both organizations agreed on the necessity of giving added attention and assistance to UNRWA, with a view to improving the living and health conditions of the Palestinians.

93. Having undertaken a thorough review of the progress achieved since the 1995 meeting at Vienna and having stated that the lack of financial resources constituted an impediment to the implementation of a number of joint projects, the agencies and programmes of the United Nations system and the League of Arab States and its institutions agreed to further consolidate and strengthen cooperation in the following areas: environment; agricultural and rural development; combating desertification; population and health, including reproductive health and family planning; refugees; human settlements; labour; education, science and culture; information; prevention of crime and abuse of drugs; training and research; industry; energy; transport; telecommunications; and trade.

94. In particular, the meeting took note of the progress achieved by the Pan-Arab Maternal and Child Health (PAPCHILD) surveys being implemented in cooperation with UNFPA, the League of Arab States, AGFUND, UNICEF, WHO and the International Planned Parenthood Federation, and considered it to be a model for inter-agency partnership in the region. The meeting also supported the continuation of this project in its future phase, the Pan-Arab Family Health Survey.

95. The meeting encouraged the strengthening of direct bilateral ties between counterpart United Nations and League of Arab States institutions within the overall framework of cooperation established by periodic general meetings.

96. In accordance with the decision of the General Assembly that inter-agency sectoral meetings should be organized on a regular basis on areas of priority to the development of Arab States, the United Nations and the League of Arab States agreed to hold a meeting on international trade and development at the League's headquarters at Cairo, in 1998.

97. The items on the agenda of the general meeting were considered by working groups composed of representatives of the departments, organizations and agencies concerned. Proposals and recommendations emanating from the discussions, as well as those contained in the working papers, were incorporated in the final document adopted by the general meeting at its closing session. The final document was transmitted by the United Nations Secretariat to all the participating agencies and organizations of the United Nations system and to the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States in August 1997.